

# USE NATIVE PLANTS FOR HABITAT OR BIODIVERSITY

City of St. Louis Sustainable Neighborhood Initiative



Pollinator Garden at Monarch Watch Headquarters in Lawrence, Kansas. [catherinesherman.wordpress.com](http://catherinesherman.wordpress.com)

## DESCRIPTION

Native plants and flowers indigenous to Missouri are typically hardiest and most acclimated to St. Louis growing conditions. Native species are well-suited to the local climate and soil, and they attract beneficial insects, birds, bees, and other creatures to create a healthier and more biodiverse urban habitat. They usually require less water, chemical fertilizer, and maintenance so they keep soils, rivers, and streams healthy, and improve human connection with landscape and wildlife. Natives attract pollinators and enhance urban production of herbs, fruit, vegetables, and honey. They beautify the neighborhood and encourage active living, education, and monetary savings.

## NEIGHBORHOOD BENEFITS

### Environmental

- Improved biodiversity, local habitat, and neighborhood greening
- Conserved water use and filtered stormwater runoff
- Reduced fertilizer pollution in rivers and streams
- Improved air, water, and energy savings and lowered local temperature
- Improved air quality from carbon sequestration
- Decreased chances of invasive plant species

### Social

- Reduced exposure to harmful chemicals
- Improved public perception of the neighborhood or site
- Increased access to natural areas for beauty, recreation, and learning

### Economic

- Reduced funds spent on replanting, yard waste disposal, fertilizer, water, lawn mowing, and long-term maintenance
- Potential to sell products like honey or berries

Native prairie project in Old North St. Louis, contributed to Gateway Greening.



Native Plants being planted for the 2010 Bring Conservation Home Program through St. Louis Audubon Society

## RELATED TOOLS

When paired with other tools, native plants can make a greener, healthier, and more beautiful neighborhood. Think about saving water and energy, local food, urban gardens, and green infrastructure. Native plants and flowers can work well with the following tools:

- **Convert Hardscape Areas to Pervious Surfaces**
- **Establish a Community Garden or Local Food Installation**
- **Install Rain Gardens or Bioswales**

## EXAMPLES

### Thurman Gateway Park, St. Louis, MO

Native prairie connecting distant areas to create a natural resource corridor.

### 13th Street Community Garden, Old North, St. Louis, MO

A Hub Community Garden providing food for the North City Farmers Market.

### Florissant Community Garden, Florissant, MO

Garden and pollination project with the community, **PAUSE**, the St. Louis Zoo, National Museums of Kenya, and Tohono Chui Park.



Urban Farm-Tour - St. Louis

## GET STARTED

- 1. Vision** Create a long-term vision and goal for the program or a green committee that is inclusive of the entire community, including youth, seniors, business owners, and all residents. Consider the organizing structure, future projects, and possible partners.
- 2. Inform** To benefit the community most, the pilot project should be visible and accessible to the public and have educational material and signage to inform visitors about the project and program.
- 3. Brainstorm** Brainstorm what kind of native plant project or program will be best for your neighborhood. Ask the following questions:
  - Who will maintain the project or run the program?
  - How will neighbors benefit in the future, and how can they be involved?
  - Does the neighborhood association have funding or will outside resources be needed?
  - What are the objectives? Habitat; Education; Pollination; Green Space; Water Filtration; or Attracting birds, bees, and butterflies?
- 4. Research** There are numerous resources available in St. Louis for getting ideas, how-to instructions, examples, guidance, and funding for creating a native landscape project. Helpful organizations are [Gateway Greening](#), [Brightside St. Louis](#), [PAUSE St. Louis](#), [Zoo](#), the [EPA](#), and [Wild Ones](#). To determine what native plants are best suited for your project, where to plant them, and how to care for them, visit [Missouri Botanical Garden](#), [Grow Native!](#), and [Missouri Department of Conservation](#). For information about birds, insects, and other fauna, visit [St. Louis Audubon Society](#), [Powder Valley Conservation Center](#), and [Missouri Department of Conservation](#). Some other helpful links can be found on blogs, including [St. Louis Zoo Beneficial Pollinators](#), [Urban Farm Online](#), [Startabeehive.com](#), and [Fromthebathtub](#).
- 5. Find a Site** If working on public property such as a park or [Land Reutilization Authority \(LRA\)](#) owned lot, be sure to coordinate with the [Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department](#) or the [St. Louis Development Corporation \(SLDC\)](#). LRA properties can usually be leased for a nominal fee if your use is approved.
- 6. Design** Design a pilot project. Use the above listed resources to create a design and construction plan. Work with those resources and perhaps a local gardener or landscape architect to help with the design. Consider the maintenance and upkeep of the landscape and who will be responsible for its care, particularly if there are active elements like bees or harvesting of fruits, vegetables, or herbs. Ensure the overall safety of residents in the design and placement of active elements.
- 7. Organize** Organize and advertise workdays. Contact your neighborhood association for help and volunteers. Ensure that you have plants, soil, and other materials delivered on time. Ask community members to lend tools, gloves, and other necessary equipment for planting or plan to buy necessary equipment beforehand.
- 8. Work** Host your workday(s)! Gather and assign tasks to your volunteers and build your native landscape. Organize this event at the right time of year so your plants will thrive and your nativescape will be successful. Plan for maintenance and upkeep days following the initial workdays to make sure your plants are flourishing.

## OPPORTUNITIES

1. Host events and programs that take advantage of the new installation or greenspace and build community involvement and support such as native plant workshops, farmer's markets, urban wildlife programs, healthy eating programs, children's gardening classes,



## RELATED SUSTAINABILITY PLAN CATEGORIES

This tool supports the following goals and strategies:

### Urban Character, Vitality & Ecology

Strategies: C5-Maintain Public spaces and neighborhood streets; E5-Promote inclusion of native plants and habitats on public and private land; H3-Provide special lot-purchasing programs and encourage creative temporary and permanent land uses; H8-Enhance community cleaning and beautification efforts.

### Health, Well-Being & Safety

Strategies: B4-Educate residents about alternatives to use of toxic materials and hazardous chemicals; B6-Remediate and redevelop contaminated land.

For the most current examples, updated tools, and information, visit the City's Sustainable Neighborhood Initiative website:

**SUSTAINABLENEIGHBORHOOD.NET**